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AUTHOR Din, Feng S.
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ABSTRACT

A survey of 419 Kentucky regular public schools was conducted to investigate how special education services are presently delivered to children with disabilities in the context of the statewide educational reform movement. The study examined: (1) how many regular public schools in Kentucky are practicing full inclusion; (2) how full inclusion and inclusion are being practiced in Kentucky regular public schools in the context of the reform movement; (3) what changes are occurring in the special education field in the same context; and (4) what differences can be found between urban and rural schools in their special education service delivery systems. Results found that approximately 80 percent of the schools practice inclusion, and 20 percent apply full inclusion. The survey also found that lack of special instructional materials and supplementary aides in regular classrooms are problems in many Kentucky regular schools. Teachers were not adequately prepared to work in inclusive settings, and special and regular education teachers do not know their roles in full inclusion. Both rural and urban regular schools faced these problems. (Contains 41 references.) (CR)

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HOW SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES ARE DELIVERED IN KENTUCKY REGULAR PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EDUCATIONAL REFORM MOVEMENT

Feng S. Din
Union College

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HOW SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES ARE DELIVERED IN KENTUCKY REGULAR PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EDUCATIONAL REFORM MOVEMENT

Abstract

How special education services are delivered in Kentucky regular public schools in the context of a state wide educational reform movement was investigated through a survey study. The data collected represent information from 419 regular public schools throughout Kentucky. Results indicate that two main types of special education services are being practiced in Kentucky regular public schools: inclusion and full inclusion, with variations in each type. Approximately 80 percent of responding schools practice inclusion, and 20 percent of them apply full inclusion. Data show that the adoption of full inclusion by the schools is not on the rise. It was also found that inclusion practice has been increased in the regular schools. There is a lack of supplementary aides, a lack of instructional materials for exceptional students in many regular classrooms. With both full inclusion and inclusion service practices, too many regular education and special education teachers lack adequate training in providing the inclusive services, and their roles are not properly defined for the service they provide. All these problems exist with both types of service programs, and also in both urban and rural regular schools. Special education services are delivered with similar approaches in Kentucky urban and rural regular schools.

HOW SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES ARE DELIVERED IN KENTUCKY REGULAR PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EDUCATIONAL REFORM MOVEMENT

The Regular Education Initiative (REI), as introduced in the mid 1980s, promotes placing all students with disabilities totally into the general education program in order for them to avoid the stigmatization, segregation and expenses that special education placements incur (Silver, 1991; Wang, 1987; Wang, Reynolds & Walberg, 1988; Wang, Rubenstein & Reynolds, 1985; Wang & Walberg, 1988). The REI-inspired movement in the 1980s has brought notable impact upon general education and changed special education in many places, such as Utah (Kulic, 1993) and Vermont (Thousand & Villa, 1990).

However, the implementation of the REI appears to be less uniformly guided. Some programs reflect real collaboration between special education and general education (Fuchs and Fuchs, 1994). In other instances, educational administrators seem to disagree with the REI concept, and they have placed all students with disabilities in general programs with little collaboration supporting their instructional needs and services (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). The latter practices have been known as the full inclusion movement.

Supporters of this movement argue that full inclusion facilitates friendships, helps special needs students develop interpersonal skills in regular classroom settings, and also helps

establish a classroom climate that encourages peer interaction (Bergen, 1993). To the leaders of this movement, social development or social competency seems to be the main goal of this movement (Beckstead, 1993; Bergen, 1993; Kubicek, 1994; Reganick, 1993; Vandercook, 1993).

With this full inclusion movement, the main strategies of various models include: home school placement; zero--rejection/ heterogeneous grouping; age-appropriate and grade-appropriate classroom placements; educational support team; use of cooperative learning and peer instruction, cross age tutoring, collaborative planning time, backward curriculum design and performance-based curriculum development, curriculum modifications, team teaching and peer tutoring (Fox & Williams, 1991; Jorgensen, 1995; Passaro, Guskey & Zahn, 1994; Sailor, Gerry & Wilson, 1990; Schrag, 1993; Stainback & Stainback, 1990; Stainback, Stainback & Forest, 1989; Thousand & Villa, 1990; York, Vandercook, Macdonald & Wolff, 1989). With respect to teacher qualifications for full inclusion programs, the competencies and knowledge required by teachers to accommodate the needs of an inclusive program have also been identified (Emporia State University, 1994).

Full inclusion appears to be more favored by administrators than by teachers (Cates & Yell, 1994). Various national organizations with an interest in the education of students with disabilities, including advocacy groups, professional associations and leadership organizations, have different goals with full inclusion: Some call for abolishing the current requirement of a

continuum of educational placements, others demand including all students with disabilities in general education (Catlett & Osher, 1994).

While REI still emphasizes preventing academic failure, emphasizes academic standards and accountability, the goals of the inclusionists are seen as focusing on abolishing special education by razing its organization and structure, eliminating the continuum of services and/or placements, and promoting solely social competence and friendships (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994).

This movement has raised serious concerns among many educators about the education students with disabilities receive in the public schools: Full inclusion may generate compromises in the values of educational excellence and efficacy (Kauffman & Hallanhan, 1995; Reganick, 1993; Smelter, Rasch & Yudewitz, 1994); it may undermine the service delivery system for individuals with severe learning disabilities; and it fails to differentiate learning disabilities from other types of learning problems (Mather & Roberts, 1994). Maloney (1995) observes that the drive for full inclusion has proven disastrous for certain learning disabled students who need alternative instructional environments, different teaching strategies, and special materials. Restricting all students to the same learning environment is considered legally and morally indefensible by Smelter, Rasch and Yudewitz (1994). Arnold and Dodge (1994) argue that school districts need not educate every disabled child in a regular classroom for the entire day, but have numerous options, so long as each child is carefully evaluated. It

is imperative, Tomey (1995) observes, that the IEP focus on meeting the students' unique needs, or inclusion take a responsible approach.

Shanker (1995) notes that most states and school districts are adopting full inclusion to save money. Requiring all disabled children to be included in regular classrooms is both unrealistic and downright harmful to the disabled children, because they are supposed to participate academically and socially without disrupting other students' learning. Wigle, Wilcox and Manges (1994) pointed out that inclusionists were overlooking such elements as the requirement that delivery of services be appropriate for the individual student, that a continuum of alternative placements be available, that the educational rights of nondisabled students not be overlooked, and that general educators be effectively prepared. Effective inclusion involves such carefully engineered programming that it might be better described as a model than merely a placement (Phillips, 1995). Critiques have also offered evidence to the effectiveness of special education and have noted that court litigation has recognized that separate is not always unequal (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995).

Literature abounds with position statements, philosophies, theories, principles, opinions and guidelines. Few studies exist on the efficacy of full inclusion programs for the broad range of students. These studies indicate mixed results: For elementary students with mild disabilities, females showed greater achievements in reading comprehension than male students (Fuller,

Ronning, VanVoorhis & Moore, 1993); elementary students with severe disabilities showed positive outcomes only in social interaction areas (Vandercook, York, Sullivan, Montie & Wolff, 1993); middle grade students with severe learning and behavioral problems could not benefit academically and behaviorally from full inclusion, neither could their normal peers (Din, 1996); for high school students with severe disabilities, the special class model instead of the full inclusion program received highest rating for quality of IEP, and both models showed identical amount of reciprocal interactions (Beckstead, Hunt, Goetz & Karasoff, 1992). As for the effects on teachers, inclusion of students with severe disabilities did not produce entirely new effects on regular classroom teachers, but generalized attitudes, philosophies and practices that had existed in the school (Rainforth, 1992).

Research findings indicate that administrators lack knowledge of special-education law and that endorsement (of full inclusion) did not require a knowledge of special education (Monteith, 1994). Literature also shows that overall teachers' attitudes were negative toward full inclusion (Fishbaugh & Gum, 1994); particularly, special education directors and teachers were opposed to full inclusion of students with behavior disorders (Cates & Yell, 1994). As literature shows, how public schools in Kentucky are delivering special education services under the statewide educational reform movement still remains an issue.

Presently the full inclusion movement appears to have become the current trend in special education in this country (Fuchs &

Fuchs, 1994; Mather & Roberts, 1994; Rodriguez & Tompkins, 1994; Sailors, Gerry & Wilson, 1990;). The rhetoric of this field has now become increasingly strident (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994).

With the Kentucky Educational Reform Act (1990), public schools throughout the state are charged with the power to make changes about their educational programs because of the school based decision making statute. In many Kentucky regular schools, the ways that special education services are delivered have been changed by their school councils in order to implement the full inclusion practice. At the April (1995) meeting of the Kentucky's State Advisory Panel For Exceptional Children, a number of such cases were reported to the Panel by parents and professional advocacy groups, who raised serious concerns about students with disabilities being fully included without getting appropriate educational services. At the end of the meeting, the Panel made a series of motions to the state Department of Education on how to provide appropriate education to students with disabilities, such as: A continuum of alternative placements be provided. However, information on the impact of full inclusion movement on the special education service delivery system in Kentucky regular public schools was unavailable. Whether the individual educational needs of students with disabilities are better met with the full inclusion practice constitutes a legitimate and serious concern to be addressed. An investigation on these issues will provide information on what is happening with the special education service delivery system in Kentucky regular public schools in the context

of the statewide educational reform movement. This is the background of how the study was initiated.

It is known that Kentucky educational reform movement is not about special education but general education. Nevertheless, changes in the special education field are occurring in the context of the statewide educational reform movement, even though the impact of the reform movement on special education field may be indirect in nature.

The purpose of the study is to investigate how special education services are presently delivered in Kentucky regular public schools in the context of the statewide educational reform movement. Specifically, it is planned to investigate how many regular public schools in Kentucky are practicing full inclusion; secondly, it is to examine how full inclusion and inclusion are being practiced in Kentucky regular public schools in the context of the reform movement; thirdly, it is to learn what new changes are occurring in special education field in the same context; and lastly, it is to learn whether there is difference between urban and rural schools in their special education service delivery systems.

Method

A survey study was conducted to collect data needed for the research questions of this investigation. Specific procedures relevant to this project are as follows.

Participants

The special educators (full time employees) in Kentucky regular public schools were surveyed. These special educators deliver special education services directly and/or indirectly to students with disabilities in their schools every school day. They have the information related to the research questions of this study.

Procedures

Sampling was conducted via the Kentucky Schools Directory (1994-95). One special educator from each regular public school was surveyed. Special schools, technical schools, vocational schools, alternative schools, preschool centers, treatment centers, etc. were not considered as mainstreamed schools (because special education service programs in these schools are generally not comparable with those in regular schools), and thus were not included. Totally, 1,224 regular schools were selected.

The survey package was sent to any special education faculty of a selected school. With the directory, the school addresses are available, the participants' names are unknown. The survey envelopes were addressed as: Special Education Faculty, plus a specific school address.

Instrument

Two types of issues were addressed in the questionnaire: type 1 was related to whether the school is practicing full inclusion or serving disabled students with alternative placements (LRE or inclusion); type two was related to how special education services

are delivered in each school (see Appendix).

The following issues were considered to have close relationships to the research questions and were selected from the literature:

Present ways of service delivery (Fuchs and Fuchs, 1994);

Date adopting full inclusion (Fuchs and Fuchs, 1994);

Initiators and/or promoters of full inclusion (Monteith, 1994);

Full Inclusion or inclusion of children with moderate and severe disabilities (Vandercook et al, 1993);

Availability of a continuum of programs in the school district (Cates & Yell, 1994);

Availability of alternative placements in the school (Wigle, Wilcox & Manges, 1994);

Any change in the number of special education programs (Wigle, Wilcox & Manges, 1994);

Availability of school-level support team (Schrag, 1993);

Role definitions for school staff members (Fox & Williams, 1991);

Pre-training of regular teachers for inclusion or before adopting full inclusion (Schrag, 1993);

Availability of instructional materials for special needs students in regular classrooms (Schrag, 1993);

Types of supplementary aides being used in regular classrooms (Fox & Williams, 1991);

Forms of support to students with disabilities and teachers in regular classrooms (Fox & Williams, 1991);

Parents' understanding of the meaning of full inclusion to their child with disability (Din, 1996);

Parents' responses to IEP change because of this full inclusion practice (Din, 1996);

Instructional strategies being used in regular classrooms (Fox & Williams, 1991);

Organizational beliefs and values in serving students with disabilities (Catlett & Osher, 1994);

Teachers' judgement about the effectiveness of full inclusion on the learning of disabled students (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995).

The questionnaire used a multiple choice type question and answeres, with an open-ended option to most of the questions (see Appendix). A cover letter introducing the purpose of this survey accompanied the questionnaire, with a postage-paid reply envelope. In the letter, inclusion was defined as LRE (with alternative placements available and students with disabilities spend some school time in the mainstreamed settings), and full inclusion was defined as placing students with disabilities in regular classrooms for full school time. The participants were also informed that this survey was anonymous and they could choose to skip any question that did not apply to their school.

Results

1,224 survey packages were sent out to special educators in the selected schools in early March, 1996. 419 schools throughout Kentucky responded. The return rate is 34 percent. Results show that there are two major types of special education service delivery systems currently being practiced in Kentucky regular public schools: inclusion (LRE) and full inclusion. In each type of service delivery system, there are variations in terms of placements.

Data indicate that presently inclusion or LRE remains to be the major type of special education service practice adopted by the majority of Kentucky regular public schools. Approximately 20 percent of Kentucky regular public schools now practice full inclusion; 80 percent of them practice inclusion. Specific information on the implementation of special education service programs in Kentucky regular public schools in the context of the state wide educational reform movement are provided as follows by service types and also by areas (urban/rural).

Inclusion

Rural Schools

Results show that in those schools (N=209) practicing inclusion service, the extent of inclusion in terms of time length or severity of disability varies from school to school. The majority of the schools include only students with mild disabilities; approximately 30 percent of them include students with mild and moderate disabilities; 15 percent of the schools

include students with all levels of disabilities to some extent.

According to 2/3 of the schools' reports, there are more special education service programs now in their districts. Approximately 24 percent of the schools note that there are fewer special education service programs in their school districts, and approximately 6 percent of them indicate that the number of special education service programs remains unchanged.

Collaboration was found to be in practice in 22 percent of the schools. Most of the regular teachers involved in inclusion service program either have limited training or little (none) training for this practice.

Instructional materials for students with special needs are not available in regular classrooms in 55 percent of the schools. In inclusive settings, special education teachers and teaching aides are the most commonly seen supplementary aides in regular classrooms, and only less than half of the schools have access to some special equipments needed by students with disabilities in regular classrooms.

The roles for school staff involved in inclusion practice are either ambiguously or not defined at all in over 60 percent of the schools. That special education teachers work directly with students with disabilities in regular classrooms and routinely support the regular teachers was found to be the most commonly used instructional model. Over half of the special education teachers note that sometimes it takes a while to get into a situation in the regular classrooms. Approximately half of them observe that the

current special education service delivery system does not meet the needs of students with disabilities in their schools.

Seven of the schools practiced full inclusion before. And two schools will adopt full inclusion next year. According to one special education teacher's report, in a middle school one student with mild mental retardation is not allowed to participate in any kind of activity with normal peers in school.

Urban schools

With all the participating urban schools (N=128) practicing inclusion service, nearly 70 percent of them include students with mild disabilities, 24 percent include students with mild and moderate disabilities, the rest of the schools include students with all levels of disabilities to some extent.

The conditions found in the urban schools on the implementation of inclusion programs are similar to those in rural schools as described above. Interestingly, 15 of the urban schools with inclusion programs practiced full inclusion before.

Full Inclusion

Rural Schools

Of the 50 fully inclusive schools, 3 schools fully include only students with mild disabilities, 18 schools fully include students with mild and moderate disabilities, 19 schools fully include students with all level of disabilities, 6 schools fully include only primary and/or elementary level students with disabilities, 3 schools fully include students with mental

retardation, and 1 school is in the process of phasing out the full inclusion practice. The data also show that the full inclusion practice was mostly promoted and initiated by district and school administrators.

Approximately 50 percent of the fully inclusive schools reported that there were no alternative placements available in their schools. About the same percentage of schools did not apply collaboration in delivering the full inclusion service. 50 percent of the regular teachers involved in full inclusion had limited or little (none) training for this practice.

In approximately half of the fully inclusive schools, instructional materials for students with special needs are not available in regular classrooms. Teaching aides and special education teachers are the only aides available in 2/3 of the schools.

While staff roles are ambiguously defined or not defined at all in 2/3 of the schools, changes on IEPs about full inclusion placement were either ambiguously or not explained at all to parents of children with disabilities. Data also indicate that the most often used instructional approaches in the fully inclusive classrooms are: special education teachers working directly with disabled students, special education teachers consulting regular teachers, adapted curriculum, and peer tutoring. In some schools, no special instructional services are provided to students with disabilities by regular teachers when special education teachers are not present.

The majority of the special education teachers feel that sometimes it takes a while to get into the regular class situation, especially for those working at middle and high schools. Half of them observe that the current special education service delivery system does not meet the needs of students with disabilities. The data also show that special education teachers in many fully inclusive schools have to work in too many classrooms, and there is not enough time for them to give students with disabilities quality help.

Urban schools

The conditions found in those participating urban fully inclusive schools (N=32) on the implementation of full inclusion programs are identical or similar to those in the rural fully inclusive schools as described above.

Discussion

Inclusion

The data show that Kentucky regular public schools are practicing more inclusion than ever, which may be because of the REI movement. With the majority of schools practicing inclusion service, as the data indicate, the preparation of regular education teachers to work with students with disabilities in regular classrooms remains a serious problem. Comparatively special education teachers are better prepared than regular teachers, even though a large number of special education teachers are not adequately trained for providing this service in regular

classrooms. It is urgent that regular education teacher training programs need to address the issue of how to get teachers adequately prepared in providing inclusion services to children with disabilities.

The reality that instructional materials for students with disabilities in regular classrooms are not available in more than 55 percent of the inclusive schools may constitute a serious obstacle to the learning of students with special needs. Without the special instructional materials, it is difficult for regular teachers and special education teachers to give students with disabilities the help they need. Probably this condition is related to budgetary problem, as is the reduction of special education service programs in many Kentucky school districts. That some Kentucky school districts created more special education service programs, some cut service programs in special education field suggests that presently the access of students with disabilities to special education service programs varies from school to school, and district to district.

Without clearly defining the roles of participating school staff in inclusion practice, it is questionable that quality educational service is provided to students with disabilities. That special education teachers provide direct instructional service to students with disabilities in regular classrooms should not be considered a good strategy for schools of all levels. When a variety of subject matters are offered in middle and high schools, it is unlikely that special education teachers are

qualified to teach in every academic area.

All these problems existing in inclusion practices in Kentucky regular public schools boil down to one issue: Schools need to address educational quality for students with disabilities while implementing inclusion programs.

Full inclusion

When the majority of the regular teachers are not adequately trained for full inclusion practice, the quality of service they provide to students with disabilities in regular classrooms seems to be questionable. Providing adequate training to those regular teachers in the fully inclusive programs appears to be an urgent task for the teacher education or professional development programs.

A related issue is that when a special education teacher has to serve 5 to 9 classrooms with the full inclusion practice, it is difficult, if not impossible, for the teacher to provide quality instruction to students with special needs. A realistic workload (for special education teachers to provide direct service in regular classrooms) needs to be worked out by those schools practicing full inclusion. And in setting the workload standard, the educational quality issue should be addressed.

As the roles of school staff are not clearly defined in too many full inclusion programs, the rationale for changing service and placements is not clearly explained to parents of children with or without disabilities, and the instructional materials for students with special needs are not available in about half of the

fully inclusive classrooms, it is imperative that these problems be solved properly, if quality education be provided to students with disabilities in those full inclusion programs.

A return rate of 34 percent is not high for a survey study. However, the data for this study are considered representative because the stamped zip codes on the returned mail represent almost all of the Kentucky zip codes. Secondly, the results of this study were summarized with the first arrived 90 percent of the data. The additional 10 percent data collected thereafter did not provide any information that warrants change to the original major findings.

Conclusion

The results suggest that presently inclusion or LRE is still the main type of special education service practice and more inclusion practices are seen in Kentucky regular public schools. The special education services are delivered with similar approaches in both urban and rural regular schools via the LRE and the full inclusion type of programs. Data also indicate that in some Kentucky school districts, the number of special education service programs has been reduced, while in many others an increase of programs has been reported. Lack of special instructional materials and supplementary aides in regular classrooms remains serious problems for quality education in many Kentucky regular schools. In too many regular schools, regular teachers and special education teachers are not adequately prepared to work in both fully inclusive and inclusive settings, and neither regular

teachers nor special education teachers know their roles in the full inclusion practices. All these problems exist similarly in both urban and rural regular schools in Kentucky in the context of a general education reform movement, which suggest that there is plenty room for both types of service programs to improve.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

Check all questions that apply, please.
Your school: Elementary____; Middle____; High____.

1. Is your school presently practicing inclusion (LRE)____, or full inclusion____?

   In what year did your school adopt full inclusion? _____

2. Your school is now practicing: more___, about the same___, less___ inclusion.

3. Who initiated this full inclusion? (Check the ones that apply):
   * Leaders of district___; * School administrators___;
   * School board___; * Parents___;
   * Regular teachers___; * Special Ed teachers___;
   * Other (specify)_____.

4. In your school district, is a continuum of service programs currently available? Yes_____; No_____;

   In your school, is a continuum of alternative placements currently available? Yes___; No___;

5. What do you think is the main belief for adopting full inclusion? (Check the one(s) that apply):
   * To improve disabled students' learning_____;
   * To promote their social interaction_____;
   * To save money___;
   * Just to make some change under educational reform_____;
   * Special education is no longer needed_____;
   * Other (specify)_____.

6. Has your school fully included students with moderate disabilities? Y___; N___; And those with severe disabilities? Y___; N___;

7. In your school district, are there more or fewer service programs for students with disabilities? More_____; Fewer_____;

8. Is there a collaboration team in your school working for the (full) inclusion practice? Yes_____; No_____;

9. How much training did regular teachers in your school receive for (full) inclusion? Adequate___; Some___; limited___; little___;

   How about special ed. teachers?
   Adequate____; Some_____; Limited_____; Little_____;

10. Are materials needed for disabled students available in regular classrooms? Yes_____; No_____;

11. What supplementary aides are currently available in your school to regular teachers and special needs students? (Check all that apply)
    Teaching aides____; Special ed teachers_____;
    Volunteers____; Special equipments____;
    Other (specify)_____;
    None of the above available at all_____;

12. How were the roles defined for all staff in your school involved in (full) inclusion?
Clearly___; Somewhat clear___; Ambiguously___; Not defined at all___;

13. How were parents explained about the related IEP changes prior to this full inclusion?
Fully clear____; Somewhat clear____;
Ambiguously____; Not explained at all_____;

14. To your knowledge, how did people react to the full inclusion in your school?

	Favor				Dislike	Don't know
Administrators	1	2	3	4	5	6
Regular teachers	1	2	3	4	5	6
Special ed teachers	1	2	3	4	5	6
Disabled students	1	2	3	4	5	6
Other parents	1	2	3	4	5	6

15. With respect to the responses of parents with disabled child to full inclusion, (Use the codes below, check the ones that apply.)
Most parents ___
Some parents ___
Few parents ___
No parent ___

Codes: 1 = support(s) it fully;
2 = support(s) it reluctantly;
3 = have no idea about it but go along with it anyway;
4 = oppose (s) it.
5 = I can not tell.

16. The teaching strategies that are being used by regular teachers in your school for (full) inclusion include:
(Check the ones that apply.)
Team teaching___; Peer teaching; Adapted curriculum___;
Special ed. teacher's routine support to regular teachers___;
Special ed teacher working routinely and directly with special needs students in regular classrooms____:
Nothing special for the disabled students____;
Other (specify)_____;

17. As you go to work daily with the special needs students in regular classrooms, you often feel that (Check the ones that apply.)

1. you can give them help immediately____;
2. sometimes it takes a while to get into situation____;
3. you don't know enough to help them in some subjects____;

18. To your knowledge, are there any organizational beliefs and values in your school on how to serve students with disabilities?
Yes_____; No_____;

19. To your knowledge, with the current special education service delivery system, are the individual educational needs of the disabled students in your school better met?
Yes____; No_____:

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

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